



Petrified Forest

NATIONAL PARK

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISION AND WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT PLAN • NEWSLETTER 1, DECEMBER 2000

Dear Friends,

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to two new planning initiatives at Petrified Forest National Park.

Park staff, in cooperation with staff from the National Park Service (NPS) Intermountain Region, are preparing to revise the park General Management Plan that was approved in 1992. We are also going to develop a Wilderness Management Plan for the park, as required by NPS policy. This newsletter provides an opportunity for you to learn about both planning processes and to comment on the management issues, including management of the park's designated Wilderness areas.

Please take the time to read this newsletter and consider the management issues already identified by park staff. By answering the questions on the enclosed comment form and providing us with any additional ideas or thoughts, you will help the NPS make sound decisions on the management of Petrified Forest National Park and the Petrified Forest National Wilderness Area.

We intend to keep you informed through periodic newsletters during the planning process. Please direct any correspondence on the General Management Plan Revision or the Wilderness Management Plan to:

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Or visit the website at: <http://www.nps.gov/planning/pefo>

Our thanks in advance for any input or assistance you can provide to the General Management Plan Revision and wilderness management planning processes.

Michele M. Hellickson
Superintendent
Petrified Forest NP



"In wildness is the preservation of the world."

"Preserving the Past"

The General Management Plan Revision

What is a general management plan?

A general management plan (GMP) is the most comprehensive type of plan the National Park Service produces for its parks. A GMP provides the basic management philosophy and guides management decisions, usually for a period of 15-20 years. It clarifies the park's purpose and significance, and defines the resource conditions and visitor experiences for which the park should be managed over time.

Within the guidelines of the park's purpose and significance, alternative approaches to park resource protection, visitor use, and development may be possible. The most desirable overall approach is determined through general management planning. Planning ensures that this decision is based on the best available information and considers the natural, cultural, and social impacts of a range of alternatives, long-term economic costs, and public interests and concerns.

The GMP focuses on why the park was created and what resource conditions and visitor experiences should exist, but does not go into detail about how to accomplish those conditions and experiences. Decisions about specific actions are deferred to subsequent levels of planning, which deal with shorter timeframes and specific sites and activities. This tiered approach to planning and decision making helps park managers stay focused on the results agreed to in the GMP while they address constantly changing opportunities and problems.

What is a general management plan revision?

Although GMPs broadly consider all aspects of park management, revisions to GMPs are more limited in scope. They focus only on certain aspects of management that have been called into question, usually due to changing circumstances or new information.

Why revise the park's general management plan?

The general management plan currently in effect, Petrified Forest National Park General Management Plan/ Development Concept Plans/ Environmental Impact Statement, was approved in 1992. Although much of the plan remains valid, there are new perspectives on some key elements:

- ⚙ The potential impact of building or expanding new facilities into previously undeveloped areas, particularly the increased visibility of facilities from busy visitor areas and wilderness, was not comprehensively addressed in the existing GMP.
- ⚙ The GMP did not recognize that many existing structures are historic, not simply old, and warrant full evaluation for adaptive re-use rather than the proposed removal. Further, the planned arrangement of buildings, parking, courtyards, and trails comprise signifi-

The Wilderness Management Planning Process

Successful management of a wilderness area is a direct result of careful and thorough planning. For the next two years, the park will be working through the wilderness management planning process. This is being done in conjunction with the GMP Revision. The first few steps have already occurred. The park staff has met and identified that a Wilderness plan is needed and developed issues of concern for managing the wilderness areas. A planning team consisting of park staff and NPS Intermountain Region personnel is being assembled. Now we are seeking public input.

Next steps will be to review public comment, revise the issue statements as necessary, and gather information on the park wilderness. A draft Wilderness Management Plan will be developed for public review. Public input will be incorporated into this document in order to produce a final plan.

We will continue to produce newsletters to keep you informed of progress on the Wilderness Management Plan. Your input is a valuable contribution to the planning effort, so please share your thoughts along the way.



Fractured segments of petrified wood litter the barren ground.

Petrified Forest National Park

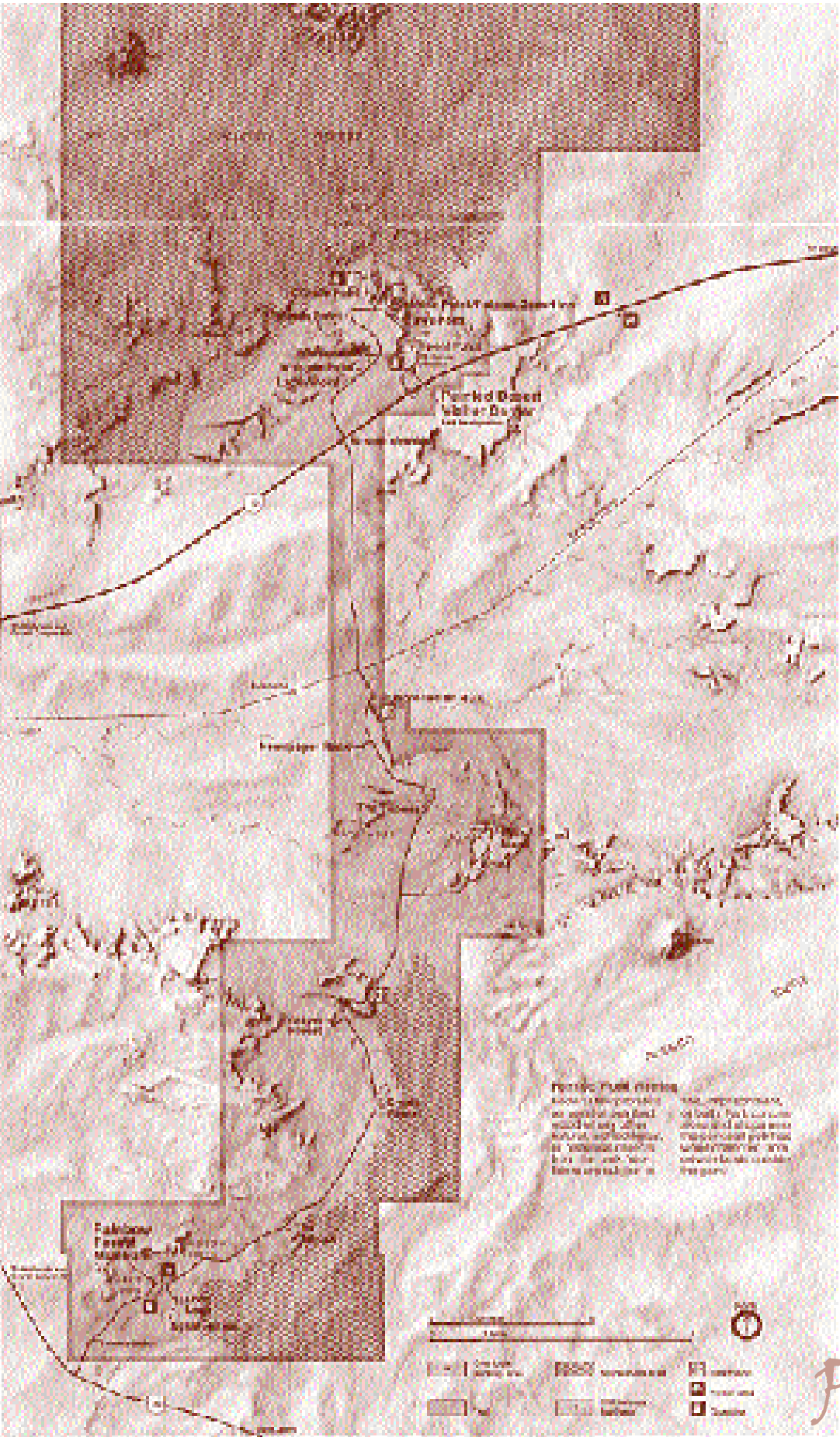
"Investing in the Future"

National Park is surrounded by lands owned by the State of Arizona, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Navajo Nation, and by privately owned lands. Interstate Highway 40 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway transect the park from east to west. A propane gas storage plant (the gas is stored in underground salt caverns) and a coal-fired power generating station lie a few miles west of the park. Retail shops are located immediately outside the southern park boundary. The subdivision of adjacent lands has the potential to impact park viewsheds and wildlife habitat for species that move in and out of the park.

- 11. Opportunities for people with various physical disabilities are limited in the park.
- 12. The NPS must determine which roads should be used and maintained for park purposes, which should be managed for their historic value, and which should be closed and returned to natural conditions. There are roads in the park in addition to those associated with the main road system used by most visitors. The condition and uses of such roads varies. Some roads are maintained for visitor purposes, some are maintained for park administrative purposes (e.g., resource management and utility access), and others are road traces remaining from earlier times. Some roads are occasionally used for administrative purposes even though they are not maintained.
- 13. The management zones in the 1992 GMP do not provide adequate direction for future management of park areas. New NPS policy and guidance for management zones were recently approved, and the park's management zones need to be revised and updated to meet the guidelines that are now in place. The new guidance says that management zones (or management prescriptions) are a tool used to identify specific areas of the park, their significant resources, and how they will be managed in the future for resource protection and visitor experience and understanding. They also specify in a general way appropriate kinds and levels of visitor use, management activities, and facilities.
- 14. Visitor experience, resource protection, and development needs must be reconsidered in the Puerco Valley and Giant Logs/Long Logs areas. New information about interpretive needs, cultural landscapes, utility capacities, wood theft, and other subjects has become available, and such information could mean that a change in management direction is needed for the two areas.

What is the schedule for the General Management Plan Revision?

There are typically several steps in developing a GMP. The first step is to reaffirm park purpose and significance; identify issues; and collect data related to the issues. Next, alternative means for achieving goals and resolving



issues are explored. After considering the potential consequences of the alternatives, the team identifies or develops a preferred alternative. The planning team then compiles this information in a draft general management plan/environmental impact statement (GMP/EIS). After public review, the GMP/EIS is finalized, a Record of Decision is published, and the park begins to implement the GMP. Public input is an important part of the entire process.

The steps and anticipated schedule for the Petrified Forest GMP Revision/EIS are shown in the table below.

Steps	Public Involvement	Anticipated Date
Scoping (purpose, significance, issues) WE ARE HERE	⚙ Publish Notice of Intent in Federal Register ⚙ Distribute Newsletter	October 2000 - January 2001
Analysis of Public Comment and Data		February 2001
Develop Alternatives	⚙ Distribute Newsletter	February - September 2001
Prepare Draft GMP Revision/EIS	⚙ Publish Notice of Availability in Federal Register ⚙ Draft GMP Revision/EIS available for public review	October 2001 - June 2002
Prepare Final GMP Revision/EIS	⚙ Publish Notice of Availability in Federal Register ⚙ Final GMP Revision/EIS available for public review	July 2002 - February 2003
Record of Decision	⚙ Publish Record of Decision in Federal Register and distribute to public	March 2003

Park Purpose and Significance

To plan for the future of Petrified Forest National Park, it is important to first verify our understanding of Congress' intent for the park and reaffirm what is special about it. The park purpose and significance statements help set the direction and limits for the GMP Revision. They help to determine how the park should be managed and used, and provide the rationale against which proposed actions can be evaluated.

Park Purpose

Park purpose statements are based on park legislation and legislative history, other special designations, and NPS policies. The statements reaffirm the reasons that a park was set aside as a unit of the National Park System, and provide the foundation for park management and use.

Petrified Forest National Park

"... a Land of quiet granduer and vivid contrasts"

The purpose of Petrified Forest National Park is to:

- ⚙️ *Preserve and protect the Petrified Forest, its outstanding paleontological sites and specimens, its associated ecosystems, cultural and historical resources, and scenic and wilderness values for present and future generations*
- ⚙️ *Provide opportunities to experience, understand, and enjoy the Petrified Forest and surrounding area in a manner that is compatible with the preservation of the park's resources and wilderness character*
- ⚙️ *Facilitate orderly, regulated, and continuing research*
- ⚙️ *Promote understanding and stewardship of resources and park values by providing educational opportunities for students, scientific groups, and the public*

Park Significance

Park significance statements capture the essence of a park's importance to our country's natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements do not inventory park resources; rather, they describe the park's distinctiveness and help to place the park within its regional, national, and international contexts. Defining park significance helps managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to accomplish the park's purpose.

Petrified Forest National Park is globally significant for its exposures of the Chinle Formation's fossils, which preserve evidence of a late Triassic Period ecosystem of more than 200 million years ago. The park's detailed paleontological (fossil) and stratigraphic (layered) records provide outstanding opportunities to study changes in organisms and their environments in order to better understand today's environment.

What is the Relationship between the General Management Plan Revision and the Wilderness Management Plan?

General management plans provide guidance on what resource conditions and visitor experiences should exist in the park and where those conditions and experiences generally should occur. Therefore, GMPs typically precede and direct wilderness management plans, which involve shorter timeframes and details about specific areas and activities. General management plans provide direction for wilderness via "management prescriptions" (also sometimes called management zones). Once the Petrified Forest GMP Revision has provided management prescriptions for the Petrified Forest wilderness, the wilderness management plan will proceed on its own schedule and will be published in a separate document.

Management prescriptions narrow the range of possible management approaches to a specific, agreed upon direction for each part of the park, including wilderness areas. Management prescriptions clearly define the specific resource conditions and visitor experiences that are to be achieved and maintained over time. They also establish in a general way the kinds and levels of visitor use, management activities, and development that are appropriate for maintaining the desired conditions. Management prescriptions direct subsequent decision making in the park, including wilderness planning, and are the core of the GMP (or in this case, the GMP Revision).

5. The GMP/EIS did not fully recognize and consider the value of historic structures and landscapes. New information is becoming available about the significance and integrity of historic structures and cultural landscapes within the park. Cultural landscapes are areas, including both cultural and natural resources, that are associated with a historic event or activity, or that exhibit other cultural or aesthetic values.
6. Buildings in the Painted Desert Visitor Center/Headquarters complex have structural problems. The complex, which includes nearly 20 structures and many courtyards, was built in the early 1960's. The design and construction of the complex did not adequately compensate for the soil conditions at the site, and walls, floors, and ceilings in many of the structures have major cracks. Despite NPS efforts to stabilize and repair the buildings, heaving and cracking continues. Some structures are so badly damaged that they may be beyond repair. The complex has recently been recognized as a significant example of "Mission 66 Program" architecture. Mission 66 was a major program for national park improvements from the 1950's through 1966. Because of this significance, the visitor center/headquarters complex is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
7. The environment where the park's museum collection is stored does not meet NPS curatorial standards. The collection is rapidly expanding as research continues and as objects on loan to universities and other organizations are returned to the park. The collection is housed at the headquarters complex in a building that has structural problems (see Issue #6 above).
8. Petrified Forest National Park offers outstanding opportunities for paleontological and other research. The park has some temporary dormitory-style housing available for researchers, but there are no designated living quarters for long term researchers and/or researchers with families. There are no adequate indoor work areas for visiting scientists.
9. Federal law directs that any concessions in national parks must be "necessary and appropriate for the accommodation of visitors to a park". This direction needs to be considered and interpreted for Petrified Forest National Park, given the availability of and demand for services now and for the life of the GMP revision, estimated at 15-20 years.
10. There is concern that certain activities on surrounding lands have the potential to harm resources within the park. Petrified Forest



Evidence of human influence on the cultural landscape at the Painted Desert Inn.

Petrified Forest National Park

"In wildness is the preservation of the world."



- ⦿ Accomplish necessary wilderness management work with the minimum tool, resorting to mechanized or motorized equipment only when its use is clearly the least damaging to the wilderness resource.
- ⦿ Manage wilderness with public involvement and interdisciplinary science.
- ⦿ Harmonize land management activities adjacent to wilderness to provide a transition from pavement to primeval.

Wilderness Areas of Petrified Forest National Park

Petrified Forest National Wilderness Area was one of the first designated wilderness areas in the National Park System. It was designated by Congress on October 23, 1970 (84 Stat. 1105). The wilderness area within Petrified Forest NP is comprised of 50,260 acres (about 54% of the park) and consists of two separate units. The Painted Desert unit in the northern part of the park comprises 43,020 acres, and the Rainbow Forest unit comprises 7,240 acres in the southeast portion of the park.

The Petrified Forest wilderness lands provide opportunities for visitors to experience some of the last surviving remnants of the Arizona short-grass prairie ecosystem, the colorful Painted Desert badlands, and the rich geology of the Chinle Formation. Scientists from many disciplines have found these areas to be a valuable outdoor laboratory. Hikers and backcountry campers enjoy the quiet solitude and tremendous scenery offered by the wilderness lands.

Petrified Forest Wilderness Management Issues

Park staff members have identified a preliminary list of issues or questions that should be addressed by the Wilderness Management Plan.

- ⦿ What is special about the Petrified Forest wilderness character and experience?
- ⦿ What are appropriate recreational uses of the wilderness based on their potential impacts to resources?
- ⦿ How much use can park wilderness areas support without impacts to park resources?
- ⦿ What is an appropriate upper size limit for organized groups using wilderness areas?
- ⦿ How should sensitive areas of park wilderness be protected?
- ⦿ How can disturbance or removal of sensitive resources in the backcountry be prevented?
- ⦿ How should scientific research (particularly research resulting in ground disturbance) that provides information to park managers be managed so that natural values of the wilderness are not impaired?
- ⦿ What important natural (unimpaired) views from park wilderness lands should be maintained?
- ⦿ What is the minimum tool for management actions in wilderness areas?

cant cultural landscapes which would have been substantially altered by the existing plan without recognition of these values. There is a much greater awareness now of cultural values that should be considered, including historic structures, cultural landscapes, archeology, ethnography, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

- ⦿ It is unlikely that Petrified Forest National Park would receive the funding to implement the proposals in the existing GMP.
- ⦿ The sustainability of proposing considerable new construction versus the feasibility and sustainability of re-using existing structures was not adequately addressed in the existing plan.
- ⦿ More up-to-date information about accessibility for people with disabilities is available.
- ⦿ Preventing theft of petrified wood remains a very high priority. More information on visitor behavior is now available.
- ⦿ The plan should be brought into conformance with new NPS guidance for general management plans.

Preliminary Issues for the General Management Plan Revision

The following is a preliminary list of issues or problems that the planning team believes the Petrified Forest GMP Revision should address. The GMP Revision will provide a framework or strategy for addressing these issues within the context of the park's purpose and significance. The statements are not listed in order of priority.

1. Theft of petrified wood continues to be a serious problem in the park. As much as 1 ton of petrified wood is carried off by visitors each month. The new NPS Management Policies that will soon be finalized would eliminate petrified wood sales from gift shops within the park (The petrified wood sold in the gift shops comes from outside the park). There is concern that eliminating petrified wood sales in park gift shops might worsen the wood theft problem within the park.
2. The GMP that was approved in 1992 recommended a boundary expansion near Dead Wash Petroglyphs, in an area that now includes Navajo lands. The Petroglyphs area is located east of the park and just south of Interstate Highway 40. Although this area consists mostly of federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, several parcels recently became new Navajo Nation lands, a situation not foreseen in the 1992 GMP.
3. The Painted Desert Inn, which has not been used for overnight lodging since the 1950's, is underutilized for park-related purposes and has major structural problems. The inn is a pueblo-style National Historic Landmark building located along the park road, overlooking the Painted Desert.

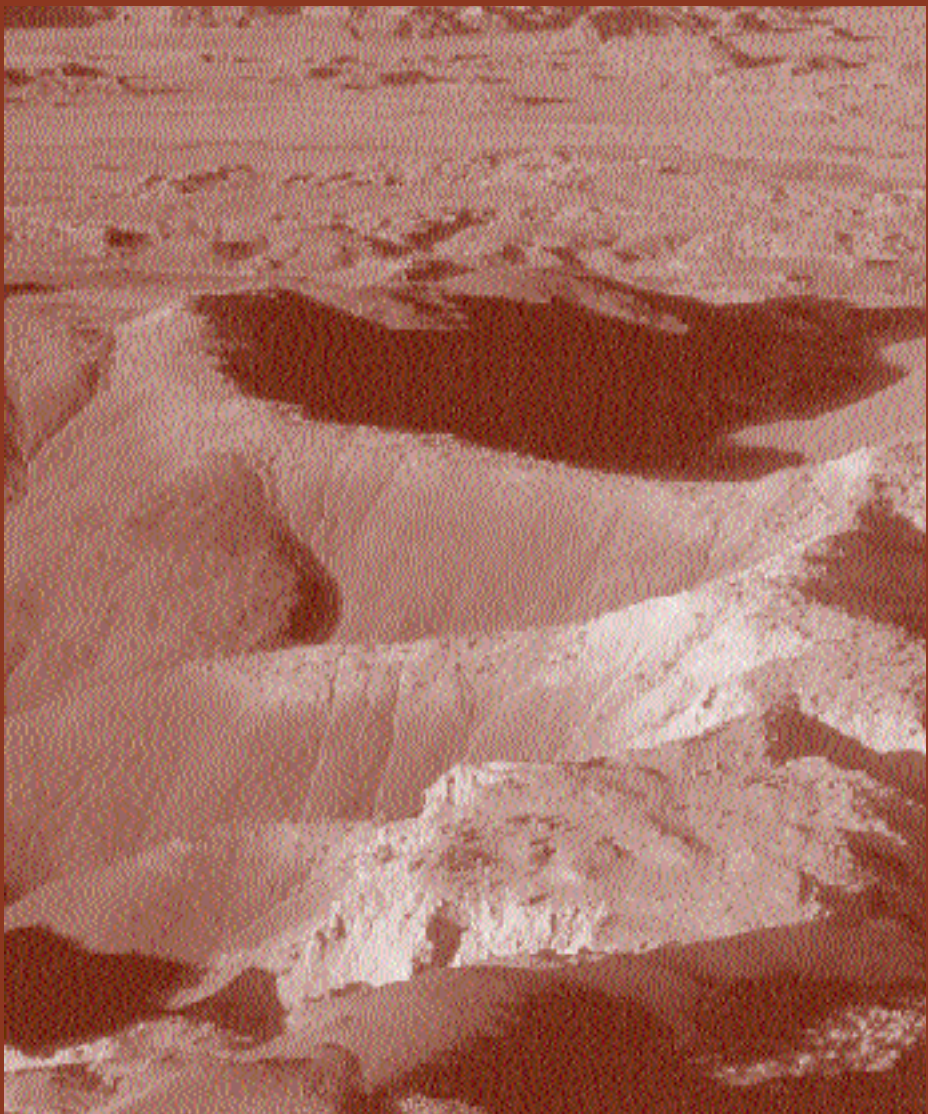
Petrified Forest National Park



"Appreciating the Present"

4. Some housing units for NPS employees and for staff who run concession operations are in poor condition and do not meet NPS standards. Housing is located near the Painted Desert Headquarters area; at the Giant Logs developed area; and in nearby Holbrook, Arizona, where the park owns several housing units at a former U.S. Air Force facility. Park housing units, with the exception of the housing in Holbrook, are historic structures; historic structures are best preserved through use. The NPS would like to reconsider questions of where housing for NPS and concessions employees should be located, the preservation of historic housing units, and how much housing should be provided.

A pedestal log at Blue Mesa balances precariously on a neck of eroding sediment.



Colorful layers of ancient sediments on display in the Painted Desert badlands.

The Wilderness Management Plan

"In wildness is the preservation of the world."
Henry David Thoreau.

The Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act was signed into law on September 4, 1964 (Public Law 88-577). The intent of Congress in establishing this Act was to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System . . . and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness."

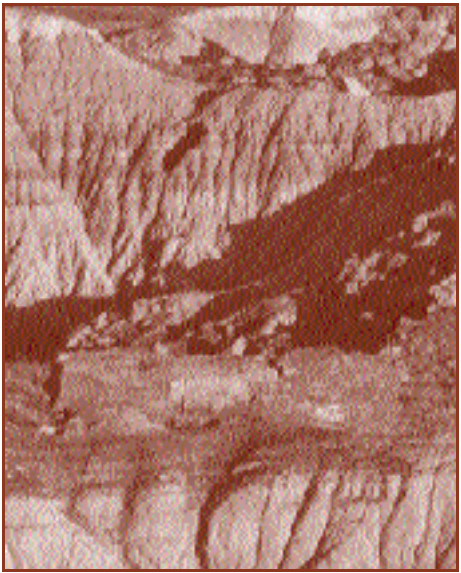
The Wilderness Act contains a definition of wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Congress further defined wilderness as an area "without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation . . ."

The National Wilderness Preservation System includes nearly 104 million acres of public land. Four federal agencies, including the NPS, manage these areas.

Wilderness Management Principles

The 88th Congress never intended to exclude human activity from Wilderness areas. However, it did intend that these lands would be managed to allow for their enjoyment without impairing the very things that make them wild. The job of the NPS is to provide for appropriate human activities in wilderness areas, but minimize the interference of those activities on the natural setting. The following principles apply to the management of wilderness areas:

- ⚙ Manage Wilderness as a unique resource with inseparable parts.
- ⚙ Manage all activities within wilderness with minimum impact to the resource. Provide for human values and benefits while preserving wilderness character. Reduce physical and social impacts of human use in wilderness through education and regulation.
- ⚙ Allow natural processes to operate freely within wilderness. Strive to retain the primeval character and influence of the wilderness area.



An exposed fossil log rests on a clay hill in Blue Mesa.

Petrified Forest National Park